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ANALYSIS OF ESL/EFL SPANISH STUDENTS STRATEGICAL BEHAVIOUR WITHIN FOUR DIFFERENT AGE AND LEVEL STAGES.

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The present papers delves into cognitive psychology in the field of learning strategies, which are the techniques and methods which language students use to enhance their own learning. The combination of linguistics and psychology took part in the early S. XX, when several figures such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky started wondering about the mental processes learners go through when acquiring a second or a foreign language. The present research into language learning strategies aims to identify the most used strategies among ESL students and to compare the strategic behaviour of younger (1º ESO) and older (2º Bachillerato) groups in the “Hijas de Jesús” school center. Furthermore, it delves into an almost untrodden field of study as it analyses the possible correlation between the students’ use of strategies and the highest marks of the group which is still open to study and which can provide different points of view to conduct further research into the process of ESL/EFL learning and the complicated system of language learning strategies. The main goal of the present study is to explore strategic behaviour awareness from the students’ part, to analyse the pupils’ strategic behaviour in different levels and to compare the similarities and differences among them and finally to check if, as some previous research in this field suggest (O'Malley, Chamot, Kupper, 1986; Rubin 1975), there is any kind of correlation between the wide use of strategies and the highest marks in the class which would be a noteworthy aspect if this hypothesis was accomplished.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning strategies have been the focus of a burgeoning number of studies in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), for they are a useful tool for people that present problems in learning second languages. Many researches have attempted to find out and even to analyse and classify the mental processes learners go through when acquiring language knowledge, as well as what makes learners successful at learning and why some people are more effective language learners than others. Nevertheless, as Wenden (1986) points out, that question cannot be answered without investigating the students’ learning strategies in depth. The present literature review will be solely focused on those studies intrinsically related to the fields of language acquisition and cognitive psychology and which have been considered as the starting point for many other empirical or theoretical studies.

Origins of language learning strategies research trace back to the early 1970's, when researchers such as Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) noticed that successful ESL students might be doing something special or different that could be learned from other students. They started, thus, to focus on language learning strategies of in order to extrapolate and implement the results of those studies in subsequent learner-training programmes¹. They found a series of characteristics and strategies required to be a successful language learner (such as being uninhibited, attending both to the form and the meaning of words, practicing the language, etc) which have been expanded and adapted by many other researchers over the last three decades (Norton & Toohey, 2001, Sewell, 2003, Thompson, 2005, Griffiths, 2008 *et al*).

A. CLASSIFICATION OF LEARNING STRATEGIES

There has been countless research regarding learning strategies taxonomy and classification during the last decades. As soon as 1978, Naiman *et. al* identified five major strategies for language learning: an active task approach, the realisation of language as a system and as a means of communication and interaction, the management of affective demands and the monitoring of L2 performance were described to be the key concepts to bear in mind by successful ESL learners. However, according to Naiman, the most frequently used techniques by the successful language learners researched were exposing themselves to the target language on all its forms, repeating words and phrases after the teacher, making vocabulary charts to be memorized, following the rules given in grammar books or text books, etc.

In 1981, Rubin conducted an in-depth study of the existing approaches on language learning strategies and was the first to make a distinction between strategies contributing directly to learning and those which affected learning in a more indirect way. Direct strategies included metacognitive and cognitive strategies and indirect strategies include communicative and social strategies. According to Rubin, there are three types of strategies used by learners that contribute either directly or indirectly to language knowledge acquisition: learning strategies (which are divided between cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies). In the second place, communication strategies emphasize the process of communication through conversation (e.g. getting meaning across or clarifying what the speaker intends) and they are exploited by speakers when they face trouble or misunderstanding regarding their communication and. Finally, social strategies are those in which learners create or are exposed to the opportunities to practice their knowledge.

Nevertheless, Brown and Palincsar (1982) were the first to classify general learning strategies as meta-cognitive, cognitive and social-affective, yet they were actually studying the language acquisition for native speakers. However, this distinction was also useful for classifying the strategies used by ESL learners, so it was taken into great consideration in for a long time. In their study, Brown and Palincsar stated that meta-cognitive strategies involve analyzing and reflect on the own learning process as such, planning for learning, monitoring and self-evaluation. Cognitive strategies, on the other hand, are

¹ The results, conclusions and findings of these and other studies are compiled in Naiman, N., Frohlich, M., Stern, H.H. & Todesco, A.. The Good Language Learner. Toronto, Modern Language Centre, Ontario Institute for Studies

intrinsically related to the mental process learners go through and to their individual mental ability. These strategies were described to be responsible for manipulating the information in order to organize it and to process it in the short and/or long term-memory. The social-affective strategies (and here it is where we find most dissonance among researchers) reflect the learners' degree of appreciation for the target language and help them in the practice process.

Many other researchers and specialists have classified learning strategies in various and different ways. Several of them have based their studies on previous research but have modified or affirmed some of the most controversial or debated points. For instance, O'Malley *et. al* (1985) and Chamot's (1990)² classification of the learning strategies into cognitive, metacognitive, social and communication strategies has also been fiercely discussed. Even if they noted the relationship between language learning strategies and general learning strategies, they found necessary to qualify the definition of "social-affective strategies" and to adapt it to the SLA field. According to these researchers, social-affective strategies mainly involve the learner in communicative interaction with another person, e.g when cooperating with peers in problem-solving exercises, when asking for clarification, etc. As for the rest of the strategies, they declare that meta-cognitive strategies involve knowing about the learning processes and regulating the cognition or the executive control or self-management through planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning activities. Cognitive strategies involve otherwise the manipulation or transformation of the material to be learned, such as resourcing, repetition, grouping, deduction, imagery, auditory representation, key word method, elaboration, transfer, inferencing, note taking, summarizing, recombination and translation (O'Malley 1985).

In 1990, Rebecca Oxford synthesised language learning strategies which were classified into two categories: direct strategies which involve use of language (memory, cognitive and compensation) and indirect strategies, those which do not directly involve using the language but support language learning and are further divided into metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. These six broad strategies include nineteen secondary strategies with sixty-two specific strategies exhaustively explained in her taxonomy, Strategy Inventory for Language learning (SILL)³, which has been since then one of the most influential instruments in the area of language learning strategies. In her book, which covers a broad range of research, Oxford also synthesizes existing research on how variables such as motivation, cultural background, gender, type of tasks, and so forth influence the choice of strategies used among EFL students.

As for Stern's (1992) taxonomy this analyst, on his part, labelled five new categories of learning strategies: first of all management and planning strategies, related to the learner's purpose to control his

in Education, 1978.

² O'Malley, J. M. and Chamot, A.U. Learning strategies in second language acquisition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

³ Included in her landmark book "Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know." (Oxford, R. L. Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1990).

³ Cohen, A. D. Strategies in learning and using a second language. London and New York: Longman, 1998.

own learning, are virtually identical to the aforementioned “metacognitive strategies”. Cognitive strategies are also present in this model, as mental procedures which help learners improve their ability to learn or remember the materials and to solve problems. Also communicative strategies, to give an example gesturing, paraphrasing, or asking for repetition and other methods employed to keep the conversation going are defined and analyzed in this taxonomy. “Interpersonal strategies” refer to other speakers monitoring the learner’s development and evaluating their performance and, finally, affective strategies learner’s attitude and perspective towards native speakers and towards the target language itself.

Cohen’s classification of language learning strategies is a little different from those of the previous researchers’. Considering the purposes of using strategies, Cohen (1998) ⁴ distinguishes two kinds of second language learner strategies: language-learning strategies and language use strategies. The former identify the material to be learned, drawing differences between it and other material, grouping it for easier learning, working on the material repeatedly, and committing the material to memory when it cannot be acquired naturally. Language use strategies are made up of retrieval (used to source material stored in the memory), rehearsal, cover (strategies used by learners to give the impression that they are in control of their learning when they are not), and communication strategies (used to convey messages to the interlocutor).

B. LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND STRATEGIC BEHAVIOUR

However, there has been very little research in the field of language proficiency related to the strategic behaviour of students and their attitude towards learning strategies as such. In 1987, Anna Uhl Chamot stated that “good language learners use a variety of strategies to assist them in gaining command over a new language skills (...) Although some learners are adept at devising strategies to assist second language acquisition, many others tend to be less effective at developing strategies and consequently may encounter difficulties in learning the new language”⁵. One study that investigated differences between more and less effective language learners focused on listening comprehension (O’Malley, Chamot, and Küpper, 1989) and significant differences in strategy use were found between effective and less effective listeners in three major areas (monitoring their comprehension, elaborating the information received and making inferences). Similar research with both high school and college foreign language students found differences between more and less effective learners in the number and range of strategies used (Fan, 2003; Bruen 2001; Halbach, 2000; Green and Oxford, 1995; Chamot, 1993; Anderson, 1991).

⁵ Chamot, A. U. *et. al*, A Study of Learning Strategies in Foreign Language Instruction. First year report, Rosslyn, VA: InterAmerican Research Associates, 1987.

C. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As indicated, there are many language learning strategies which have been studied and classified in various ways by many researchers. Early action research on language learning mainly focused on identifying strategies used by “good learners”, whereas more recent studies have tried to classify and analyse how strategies can help all kind of students to learn a second language in a more efficient way. One of the most important and widespread taxonomies was established first in O'Malley *et. al* (1985) with his classification of the learning strategies into cognitive, metacognitive, social and communication strategies. However, Rebecca Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language learning (SILL), which distinguished between direct and indirect, main and secondary strategies is the one of the most influential, useful and praised instruments in the area of language learning strategies and we can say that it definitely established the most exhaustive hierarchy of learning strategies up to date. Strategic differences between more and less effective learners have been documented through research in both first and second language contexts. According to the previous review, “Better” learners seem to have greater metacognitive awareness, which helps them select appropriate strategies for a specific task.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

- Are students aware of their strategic behaviour when learning English as a second language?
- Do beginning level foreign language students use the same type of strategies as more advanced students? Do they use strategies as frequently as more advanced students?
- Which are the most and the less used strategies among all the students researched when learning English as a second language?
- Is there any kind of correlation between the highest marks in the group and the number or the type of strategies reported by students?

Based on the results of the studies mentioned in the previous section, the most feasible hypothesis from the researcher's point of view was that successful English learners will develop a higher number of strategies than those who had more difficulties when learning the English language.

METHOD

The present study was conducted within four groups of students in secondary education classrooms (1°, 2°, 4° ESO and 2° Bachiller) in the Pamploneese school centre “Hijas de Jesús”. The participants were 87 EFL Spanish learners aged between 12-17 years, hence their level and their time of exposure to English language varied depending on the course they were studying in.

	1° ESO	2° ESO	4° ESO	2° BACHILLER
Time of Exposure	375 hours	473 hours	572 hours	671 hours
Average English Level	Pre-Intermediate	Pre- Intermediate	Intermediate	Upper-intermediate
Average English Mark	6,56	4,92	4,28	6,17
Number of students	16	19	17	24

The investigated groups were quite heterogeneous among themselves since, despite they all had a very similar sociocultural background, we could obviously observe plenty of differences between the youngest groups of students and the oldest ones. As for the data collection and analysis, the researcher made use of an open questionnaire in which students had to explain the strategies (if any) they used in each of the situations described on it. This questionnaire, included in Annexe 1, was adapted by the researcher from the original study (Pilar Franco Navarro, 2004) that was, in turn, based on the teaching learning strategies materials designed by Ellis y Sinclair (1989) and Chamot Küpper (1989). The questionnaire was prepared and answered in Spanish so as to avoid students having comprehension or expression problems and, for scrutiny purpose and for practical reasons, participants were also given a “Possible Answers Sheet” in which they could choose among more than 30 common and befitting strategies used by EFL students when acquiring a second language.

The test was planned for a whole lesson of 55 minutes and it was to be done individually. The researcher explained students they should try to identify the strategies they used in the list they had been given and, in case they used any other technique that wasn't mentioned in that list, they should reflect on their own strategies employed to deal with different skills and areas of the English language, decide which of them might be considered effective or ineffective and write it in the answers sheet. Students were also reminded that this questionnaire was for research purposes so they should dismiss the idea (several of them inquired about it) that their English teacher would take into account any of their answers and it would have any repercussions in their English mark. They should be as frank as possible and they should also express themselves when needed in order to make it easier for the researcher to understand their way of learning and to know the most common strategies used by these EFL students. Students were asked to detail the mental processes they went through in each of the situations described and to ask the researcher any doubt they had.

The questionnaire was made up of 16 questions referring to the different skills students normally work on: speaking, listening, reading and writing as well as 4 additional questions related to the memorizing process. However, the present paper will only analyse the use of indirect learning strategies (metacognitive, cognitive and social-affective) and will leave aside the direct ones, since it's a field that has already been researched and discussed ad infinitum.

For interpreting purposes, answers given by students were gathered depending on the skill they were related to and on their frequency of use according to the data students had reported. For enhancing students' comprehension, two versions of the same questionnaire were prepared, one explaining the strategies and asking in a plainer and simpler language for students in 1° ESO and 2° ESO and other with a higher-level language register, maybe more specific, for students in 4° ESO and 2° Bachiller. The study took one session for each group, yet the researcher had to return to several classes since there were some students who hadn't answered all the questions properly or who had even forgotten to write their names on some of the questionnaires, something that was crucial for this study in order to analyze the possible relationship between the wide use of learning strategies and the highest marks of the class.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results were obtained dividing the number of mentions between the total number of strategies in all the skills what gives us the rate of use for each strategy. We must take into account that students could report as many strategies as they used for each skill, that's the reason why in some occasions the total number of mentioned strategies sometimes exceeds the number of students in the class.

STRATEGIES	LINGUISTIC SKILLS			
	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
Group A (1° ESO D)				
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended Observation 10 (32%) • Contextualisation 7 (23%) • Resourcing 7 (23%) • Practice 6 (19%) • Phrase analysis 5 (16%) • Verifying 5 (16%) • Emphasizing 4 (13%) • Key words 4 (13%) • Translation 4 (13%) • Elaboration 3 (10%) • Summary 3 (10%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended Observation 12 (39%) • Prediction 9 (29%) • Contextualisation 6 (19%) • Elaboration 6 (19%) • Note-taking 4 (13%) • Translation 4 (13%) • Phrase analysis 3 (10%) • Transfer 3 (10%) • Auditory Representation 2 (6%) • Deductive Reasoning 2 (6%) • Resourcing 2 (6%) • Inductive Inference 1 (3%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended Observation 13 (42%) • Repetition 11 (36%) • Auditory Representation 8 (26%) • Resourcing 8 (26%) • Translation 7 (23%) • Contextualisation 6 (19%) • Inductive Inference 5 (16%) • Verifying 5 (16%) • Practice 4 (13%) • Deductive Reasoning 3 (10%) • Elaboration 3 (10%) • Attempt and Error 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice 11 (37%) • Intended Observation 7 (23%) • Elaboration 6 (19%) • Inductive Inference 6 (19%) • Repetition 6 (20%) • Transfer 5 (16%) • Translation 5 (17%) • Auditory Representation 4 (13%) • Attempt and Error 3 (10%) • Resourcing 3 (10%) • Deductive Reasoning 2 (6%) • Grouping 2 (6%) • Phrase analysis 2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prediction 2 (6%) • Transfer 2 (6%) • Auditory Representation 1 (3%) • Deductive Reasoning 1 (3%) • Repetition 1 (3%) • Attempt and Error 0 • Grouping 0 • Inductive Inference 0 • Note-taking 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key words 1 (3%) • Summary 1 (3%) • Verifying 1 (3%) • Attempt and Error 0 • Emphasizing 0 • Grouping 0 • Practice 0 • Repetition 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 (6%) • Prediction 2 (6%) • Transfer 2 (6%) • Key words 1 (3%) • Phrase analysis 1 (3%) • Emphasizing 0 • Grouping 0 • Note-taking 0 • Summary 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (6%) • Prediction 2 (6%) • Contextualisation 0 • Emphasizing 0 • Key words 0 • Note-taking 0 • Summary 0 • Verifying 0
Cognitive (total)	65	57	77	64
Metacognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 9 (29%) • Directed Attention 4 (13%) • Self-evaluation 3 (10%) • Advance Organisers 1 (3%) • Advance Preparation 1 (3%) • Self-management 1 (3%) • Self-monitoring 1 (3%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 7 (23%) • Self-management 5 (16%) • Directed Attention 4 (13%) • Self-evaluation 2 (6%) • Self-monitoring 2 (6%) • Advance Organisers 0 • Advance Preparation 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance Preparation 10 (32%) • Directed Attention 5 (16%) • Self-monitoring 4 (13%) • Self-evaluation 3 (10%) • Selective Attention 2 (6%) • Self-management 2 (6%) • Advance Organisers 1 (3%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance Preparation 9 (30%) • Directed Attention 7 (23%) • Self-management 3 (19%) • Self-evaluation 2 (6%) • Self-monitoring 2 (6%) • Selective Attention 1 (3%) • Advance Organisers 0
Metacognitive (total)	19	20	27	24
Social-affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for Clarification 4 (13%) • Anxiety Lowering 2 (6%) • Anxiety Expression 0 • Cooperation 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety Lowering 3 (10%) • Anxiety Expression 1 (3%) • Cooperation 0 • Asking for Clarification 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety lowering 2 (6%) • Cooperation 1 (3%) • Asking for Clarification 0 • Anxiety Expression 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for Clarification 7 (23%) • Cooperation 5 (16%) • Anxiety Expression 4 (13%) • Anxiety Lowering 2 (6%)
Social-affective (total)	6	4	3	18

As we can see, students in this group reported to use cognitive strategies more than any other kind of strategy or technique, with 263 mentions over the 16 queries in the questionnaire. Students also alluded to a total of 90 metacognitive strategies and 31 social-affective strategies, what makes up a total of 384 strategy mentions. The most used strategy for the reading, listening and writing skills has been intended observation, that is, focusing on strictly linguistic aspects of the text, listening or activity in order to achieve better understanding or expression and, as regards the speaking skill, practice was reported to be the most used strategy. Repetition also had a high rate of use within the writing skill, with a rate of use of 36% from the students' part followed by prediction, that is to say, taking into account the paralinguistic elements of the conversation or activity such as the participants involved, the relationship existing among them along with other. As for the metacognitive strategies, advance preparation (planning the linguistic

components for a forthcoming language task) has been the most mentioned strategy within both the writing and speaking skills, closely followed by selective attention (deciding beforehand to strictly focus on the pieces of information that we're asked in the activity to focus on) which has been the most used strategy in both reading and listening skills. Finally, with respect to social-affective skills, asking for clarification, cooperation (working or practicing with fellow-students, friends, relatives and so forth on language) and anxiety expression have been the most mentioned strategies.

STRATEGIES	LINGUISTIC SKILLS			
Group B (1° ESO B)	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resourcing 10 (32%) • Intended Observation 8 (26%) • Translation 8 (26%) • Contextualisation 6 (19%) • Transfer 6 (19%) • Elaboration 5 (16%) • Verifying 5 (16%) • Repetition 4 (13%) • Deductive Reasoning 3 (10%) • Emphasizing 3 (10%) • Key words 3 (10%) • Prediction 2 (6%) • Summary 1 (3%) • Practice 0 • Note-taking 0 • Phrase analysis 0 • Auditory Representation 0 • Inductive Inference 0 • Attempt and Error 0 • Grouping 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextualisation 8 (26%) • Transfer 7 (23%) • Translation 7 (23%) • Elaboration 5 (16%) • Prediction 5 (16%) • Inductive Inference 4 (13%) • Note-taking 4 (13%) • Intended Observation 3 (10%) • Key words 3 (10%) • Auditory Representation 3 (10%) • Resourcing 3 (10%) • Deductive Reasoning 2 (6%) • Verifying 2 (6%) • Practice 1 (3%) • Attempt and Error 0 • Emphasizing 0 • Grouping 0 • Phrase analysis 0 • Repetition 0 • Summary 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resourcing 11 (36%) • Auditory Representation 8 (26%) • Verifying 8 (26%) • Intended Observation 7 (23%) • Transfer 7 (23%) • Deductive Reasoning 5 (16%) • Practice 4 (13%) • Translation 4 (13%) • Attempt and Error 3 (10%) • Contextualisation 2 (6%) • Inductive Inference 2 (6%) • Grouping 1 (3%) • Prediction 1 (3%) • Repetition 1 (3%) • Elaboration 0 • Emphasizing 0 • Key words 0 • Note-taking 0 • Phrase analysis 0 • Summary 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice 11 (36%) • Resourcing 7 (23%) • Auditory Representation 6 (19%) • Transfer 6 (19%) • Attempt and Error 5 (16%) • Intended Observation 5 (16%) • Translation 5 (16%) • Deductive Reasoning 3 (10%) • Inductive Inference 3 (10%) • Grouping 3 (10%) • Repetition 3 (10%) • Elaboration 2 (6%) • Prediction 2 (6%) • Summary 1 (3%) • Contextualisation 0 • Emphasizing 0 • Key words 0 • Note-taking 0 • Phrase analysis 0 • Verifying 0
Cognitive (total)	64	57	64	62
Metacognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 6 (19%) • Self-evaluation 2 (6%) • Self-monitoring 2 (6%) • Directed Attention 1 (3%) • Advance Organisers 0 • Advance Preparation 0 • Self-management 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 8 (26%) • Self-monitoring 4 (13%) • Directed Attention 3 (10%) • Advance Organisers 0 • Advance Preparation 0 • Self-evaluation 0 • Self-management 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 4 (13%) • Advance Preparation 2 (6%) • Advance Organisers 1 (3%) • Directed Attention 1 (3%) • Self-evaluation 1 (3%) • Self-management 1 (3%) • Self-monitoring 1 (3%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance Preparation 9 (29%) • Selective Attention 8 (26%) • Directed Attention 1 (3%) • Self-evaluation 1 (3%) • Self-management 1 (3%) • Advance Organisers 0 • Self-monitoring 0

Metacognitive (total)	11	15	10	20
Social-affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking for Clarification 5 (16%) Anxiety Expression 0 Anxiety Lowering 0 Cooperation 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation 0 Asking for Clarification 0 Anxiety Lowering 0 Anxiety Expression 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation 2 (6%) Asking for Clarification 1 (3%) Anxiety Lowering 0 Anxiety Expression 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation 7 (23%) Asking for Clarification 2 (6%) Anxiety Lowering 1 (3%) Anxiety Expression 1 (3%)
Social-affective (total)	5	6	3	11

Results in the group of 1° ESO B show that there are 247 mentions regarding cognitive strategies, 56 allusions related to metacognitive strategies and 25 remarks concerning social-affective strategies (328 strategies in total). Practice has been the most used strategy with a 32% of the answers within the speaking skill, followed by the use of resources, auditory representation (keeping a sound or sound sequence in the mind) and transfer or the use of linguistic (grammatical, phonetic, lexical, etc.) previous knowledge to help language production or understanding. As for both reading and writing skills, the most used strategy has been the aforementioned resourcing strategy followed by auditory representation, verifying (through different resources that the information makes sense and/or doesn't contain errors) intended observation and translation. Within the metacognitive strategies, results show that advance preparation and selective attention have been the most used strategies within the speaking skill. The latter one has also been the most used metacognitive strategy both for reading and listening skills. Finally, cooperation and asking for clarification have been the most mentioned strategies in their respective subcategories.

STRATEGIES	LINGUISTIC SKILLS			
Group C (2° ESO A)	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation 12 (39%) Resourcing 9 (29%) Contextualisation 5 (16%) Inductive Inference 5 (16%) Prediction 5 (16%) Summary 5 (16%) Emphasizing 4 (13%) Intended Observation 4 (13%) Repetition 4 (13%) Deductive Reasoning 3 (10%) Note-taking 3 (10%) Key words 2 (6%) Verifying 2 (6%) Phrase analysis 1 (3%) Auditory Representation 1 (3%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation 14 (45%) Transfer 10 (32%) Contextualisation 7 (23%) Note-taking 7 (23%) Prediction 7 (23%) Auditory Representation 6 (19%) Elaboration 6 (19%) Resourcing 6 (19%) Summary 6 (19%) Intended Observation 5 (16%) Deductive Reasoning 4 (13%) Inductive Inference 4 (13%) Grouping 3 (10%) Key words 3 (10%) Phrase analysis 3 (10%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auditory Representation 11 (36%) Inductive Inference 8 (26%) Practice 7 (23%) Resourcing 7 (23%) Deductive Reasoning 6 (19%) Intended Observation 6 (20%) Translation 6 (20%) Transfer 5 (16%) Verifying 5 (16%) Contextualisation 4 (13%) Grouping 3 (10%) Note-taking 3 (10%) Attempt and Error 2 (6%) Summary 2 (6%) Elaboration 1 (3%) Emphasizing 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice 13 (42%) Transfer 9 (29%) Auditory Representation 7 (23%) Attempt and Error 6 (19%) Translation 6 (19%) Elaboration 5 (16%) Inductive Inference 4 (13%) Resourcing 4 (13%) Deductive Reasoning 3 (10%) Intended Observation 3 (10%) Contextualisation 2 (6%) Key words 2 (6%) Repetition 2 (6%) Prediction 1 (3%) Emphasizing 0 Grouping 0

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaboration 1 (3%) • Transfer 1 (3%) • Practice 1 (3%) • Attempt and Error 0 • Grouping 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice 3 (10%) • Verifying 1 (3%) • Attempt and Error 0 • Emphasizing 0 • Repetition 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3%) • Key words 1 (3%) • Repetition 1 (3%) • Phrase analysis 0 • Prediction 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note-taking 0 • Phrase analysis 0 • Summary 0 • Verifying 0
Cognitive (total)	68	95	79	67
Metacognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 8 (26%) • Directed Attention 1 (3%) • Self-monitoring 1 (3%) • Advance Organisers 0 • Self-evaluation 0 • Advance Preparation 0 • Self-management 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 12 (39%) • Directed Attention 4 (13%) • Self-evaluation 3 (10%) • Advance Organisers 2 (6%) • Self-management 2 (6%) • Advance Preparation 0 • Self-monitoring 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 7 (23%) • Advance Preparation 5 (16%) • Directed Attention 5 (16%) • Self-monitoring 4 (13%) • Self-evaluation 1 (3%) • Self-management 1 (3%) • Advance Organisers 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance Preparation 7 (23%) • Self-evaluation 5 (16%) • Self-monitoring 3 (10%) • Directed Attention 2 (6%) • Selective Attention 2 (6%) • Advance Organisers 0 • Self-management 0
Metacognitive (total)	10	23	23	19
Social-affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety Expression 0 • Anxiety Lowering 0 • Asking for Clarification 0 • Cooperation 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for Clarification 6 (19%) • Anxiety Expression 1 (3%) • Anxiety Lowering 1 (3%) • Cooperation 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation 3 (10%) • Anxiety Expression 1 (3%) • Asking for Clarification 1 (3%) • Anxiety Lowering 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation 8 (26%) • Anxiety Lowering 2 (6%) • Asking for Clarification 1 (3%) • Anxiety Expression 0
Social-affective (total)	0	8	5	11

In this case, there are 309 mentions to cognitive strategies, 75 metacognitive techniques and 24 social-affective strategies, what makes a total of 408 strategies mentioned. Results in this group show that translation is the most used strategy with a rate of use of 45% and 39% within respectively listening and reading skills, closely followed by practice in speaking activities and by auditory representation within the writing skill. Transfer has also been one of the most used activities both in listening and speaking activities and resourcing has also been very mentioned within the reading skill. With regard to metacognitive strategies, selective attention has been the most used strategy in reading, listening and writing skills followed by advance preparation in the speaking and writing skills and self-evaluation in the speaking skill. The eventual outcome for social-affective skills shows that cooperation has been again the most used social-affective strategy both in speaking and writing skills whereas asking for clarification has been the most mentioned strategy within the listening skill.

STRATEGIES	LINGUISTIC SKILLS			
	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
Group D (4° ESO A)				
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key words 6 (19%) • Translation 5 (16%) • Verifying 5 (16%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation 10 (32%) • Prediction 8 (26%) • Intended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifying 7 (23%) • Intended Observation 5 (16%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer 10 (32%) • Resourcing 7 (23%) • Prediction 6 (19%)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contextualisation 4 (13%) Deductive Reasoning 4 (13%) Resourcing 4 (13%) Summary 4 (13%) Elaboration 3 (10%) Emphasizing 3 (10%) Phrase analysis 2 (6%) Inductive Inference 2 (6%) Prediction 2 (6%) Transfer 2 (6%) Auditory Representation 1 (3%) Intended Observation 1 (3%) Attempt and Error 0 Grouping 0 Note-taking 0 Practice 0 Repetition 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation 7 (23%) Key words 7 (23%) Transfer 5 (16%) Phrase analysis 4 (13%) Summary 4 (13%) Deductive Reasoning 3 (10%) Attempt and Error 1 (3%) Contextualisation 3 (10%) Elaboration 1 (3%) Grouping 1 (3%) Inductive Inference 1 (3%) Note-taking 1 (3%) Repetition 1 (3%) Verifying 1 (3%) Auditory Representation 0 Emphasizing 0 Practice 0 Resourcing 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition 5 (16%) Transfer 5 (16%) Elaboration 4 (13%) Resourcing 4 (13%) Translation 4 (13%) Deductive Reasoning 3 (10%) Attempt and Error 3 (10%) Inductive Inference 2 (6%) Summary 2 (6%) Auditory Representation 1 (3%) Emphasizing 1 (3%) Grouping 1 (3%) Key words 1 (3%) Contextualisation 0 Note-taking 0 Phrase analysis 0 Practice 0 Prediction 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice 5 (16%) Translation 5 (16%) Attempt and Error 4 (13%) Intended Observation 4 (13%) Inductive Inference 3 (10%) Repetition 3 (10%) Verifying 2 (6%) Deductive Reasoning 1 (3%) Elaboration 1 (3%) Note-taking 1 (3%) Phrase analysis 1 (3%) Summary 1 (3%) Auditory Representation 0 Contextualisation 0 Emphasizing 0 Grouping 0 Key words 0
Cognitive (total)	48	58	48	54
Metacognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-evaluation 3 (10%) Advance Organisers 2 (6%) Selective Attention 2 (6%) Advance Preparation 0 Directed Attention 0 Self-management 0 Self-monitoring 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selective Attention 7 (23%) Directed Attention 3 (10%) Self-monitoring 3 (10%) Advance Organisers 1 (3%) Self-evaluation 1 (3%) Self-management 1 (3%) Advance Preparation 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advance Preparation 4 (13%) Advance Organisers 3 (10%) Directed Attention 3 (10%) Selective Attention 3 (10%) Self-management 2 (6%) Self-evaluation 0 Self-monitoring 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-evaluation 4 (13%) Directed Attention 3 (10%) Self-management 3 (10%) Advance Organisers 2 (6%) Advance Preparation 2 (6%) Selective Attention 0 Self-monitoring 0
Metacognitive (total)	7	16	15	14
Social-affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking for Clarification 2 (6%) Anxiety Lowering 1 (3%) Cooperation 1 (3%) Anxiety Expression 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking for Clarification 3 (10%) Anxiety Lowering 1 (3%) Anxiety Expression 1 (3%) Cooperation 1 (3%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation 3 (10%) Asking for Clarification 2 (6%) Anxiety Lowering 2 (6%) Anxiety Expression 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation 13 (42%) Anxiety Lowering 5 (16%) Asking for Clarification 3 (10%) Anxiety Expression 1 (3%)
Social-affective (total)	4	6	7	22

Students in 4º ESO A made a total of 208 cognitive strategies, 52 metacognitive strategies and 39 social-

affective strategies, what makes up a total of 299 mentions of strategies. As the table shows, students in this group reported cooperation as the most used technique within the speaking skill, something quite unusual since social-affective strategies tend to be the less mentioned kind of strategies yet, as we can see, they experiment quite a high increase within the speaking skill in all the groups researched. Concerning cognitive strategies, key words (using key word memory and searching techniques, such as identifying an L2 key word that can help students to accomplish an activity), translation and verifying have been the most mentioned strategies for the reading skill and translation, prediction, key words and intended observation have been the most used strategies for the listening skill. Within the writing skill, the most used cognitive strategies have been verifying, intended observation, repetition and transfer and, for the speaking skill, the most used strategies have been transfer, resourcing and prediction. With regard to metacognitive strategies, the most used technique has been selected attention within the listening skill, where it is followed by directed attention (when doing an activity, consciously focusing on it and ignoring any disturbance or disruption) and self-monitoring (mentally checking one's performance or understanding; wondering and ensuring that what we hear, read, write or speak makes sense to us). Self-evaluation has been the most used metacognitive strategy both for reading and speaking skills. In the latter one, it is followed by directed attention and self-management (autonomously trying to arrange or create the appropriate conditions for achieving high learning and performance results). Finally, concerning the writing skill, the most used metacognitive strategy has been advance preparation, closely followed by advance organisers (reviewing the class materials beforehand in order to know more about the following lesson), directed attention and selective attention.

STRATEGIES	LINGUISTIC SKILLS			
Group E (2° Bachiller)	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetition 14 (45%) • Contextualisation 13 (42%) • Key words 11 (35%) • Transfer 6 (19%) • Translation 6 (19%) • Inductive Inference 5 (16%) • Intended Observation 5 (16%) • Summary 5 (16%) • Elaboration 4 (13%) • Emphasizing 3 (10%) • Resourcing 3 (10%) • Verifying 3 (10%) • Deductive Reasoning 2 (6%) • Note-taking 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key words 13 (50%) • Contextualisation 9 (29%) • Phrase analysis 9 (29%) • Intended Observation 8 (26%) • Translation 7 (23%) • Transfer 6 (19%) • Summary 4 (13%) • Verifying 4 (13%) • Elaboration 3 (10%) • Inductive Inference 3 (10%) • Prediction 3 (10%) • Deductive Reasoning 2 (6%) • Note-taking 2 (6%) • Resourcing 2 (6%) • Emphasizing 1 (3%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended Observation 16 (52%) • Auditory Representation 8 (26%) • Inductive Inference 7 (23%) • Verifying 7 (23%) • Practice 6 (19%) • Resourcing 5 (16%) • Transfer 4 (13%) • Deductive Reasoning 3 (10%) • Grouping 2 (6%) • Key words 2 (6%) • Prediction 2 (6%) • Translation 2 (6%) • Attempt and Error 1 (3%) • Elaboration 1 (3%) • Phrase analysis 1 (3%) • Contextualisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice 9 (29%) • Resourcing 7 (23%) • Transfer 7 (23%) • Verifying 6 (19%) • Deductive Reasoning 5 (16%) • Inductive Inference 5 (16%) • Prediction 5 (16%) • Auditory Representation 3 (10%) • Grouping 3 (10%) • Attempt and Error 1 (3%) • Translation 1 (3%) • Contextualisation 0 • Elaboration 0 • Emphasizing 0 • Intended Observation 0 • Key words 0 • Note-taking 0 • Phrase analysis 0

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (6%) • Phrase analysis 2 (6%) • Prediction 1 (3%) • Auditory Representation 0 • Attempt and Error 0 • Grouping 0 • Practice 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping 0 • Practice 1 (3%) • Repetition 0 • Attempt and Error 0 • Auditory Representation 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 • Emphasizing 0 • Note-taking 0 • Repetition 0 • Summary 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary 0 • Repetition 0
Cognitive (total)	85	77	67	52
Metacognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 17 (52%) • Self-monitoring 7 (23%) • Advance Organisers 1 (3%) • Advance Preparation 1 (3%) • Directed Attention 1 (3%) • Self-evaluation 1 (3%) • Self-management 0 • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 25 (81%) • Self-monitoring 5 (16%) • Directed Attention 3 (10%) • Self-management 1 (3%) • Advance Organisers 0 • Advance Preparation 0 • Self-evaluation 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance Preparation 15 (48%) • Selective Attention 10 (32%) • Self-management 3 (10%) • Advance Organisers 2 (6%) • Directed Attention 2 (6%) • Self-evaluation 2 (6%) • Self-monitoring 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance Preparation 7 (23%) • Directed Attention 5 (16%) • Selective Attention 4 (13%) • Self-management 2 (6%) • Advance Organisers 1 (3%) • Self-evaluation 0 • Self-monitoring 0
Metacognitive (total)	28	34	34	19
Social-affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation 4 (13%) • Asking for Clarification 0 • Anxiety Lowering 0 • Anxiety Expression 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation 4 (13%) • Asking for Clarification 2 (6%) • Anxiety Expression 0 • Anxiety Lowering 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety Lowering 3 (10%) • Cooperation 3 (10%) • Asking for Clarification 1 (3%) • Anxiety Expression 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation 15 (48%) • Anxiety Lowering 9 (29%) • Asking for Clarification 3 (10%) • Anxiety Expression 0
Social-affective (total)	4	6	7	27

In this case, there is a total of 281 mentions to cognitive strategies, 115 to metacognitive strategies and 44 to social-affective strategies, what adds up 440 mentions. Results show the most used cognitive strategy has been intended observation, within the writing skill, followed by auditory representation, inductive inference (thinking of how the L1 works in order to compare it with the L2 and thus achieve a better understanding or production), verifying and practice. Key words, within the listening skill, is the second most used cognitive strategy, followed by contextualisation (placing a word or phrase in a given context in order to be able to deduce its meaning), phrase analysis (paying special attention to certain phrases in order to achieve a better understanding or production), intended observation and translation. As for the reading skill, the most used strategies have been repetition, contextualisation, key words, transfer and translation. Within the speaking skills, the most mentioned techniques were practice, resourcing, transfer and verifying. However, students in 2º Bachiller reported to use selective attention,

within the listening skill, more than any other kind of technique with a rate of use of 81%. As for the rest of metacognitive strategies, advance preparation (in writing and speaking skills) and self-monitoring (within reading and listening skills) have also been identified as some of the most useful strategies by students. Finally, cooperation (within the speaking skill) was reported to be the most used social-affective strategy, followed by anxiety lowering and asking for clarification. Within the rest of skills, cooperation has also been the most used strategy within reading and listening skills and it's also the most used strategy, along with anxiety lowering, for the writing skill.

Now that we know the results and figures obtained in the experiment, the next step will be itemizing and trying to find an answer to the research questions in the light of previous studies. The first research question was about strategic behaviour awareness from the part of students and, after examining in depth all the answers in the five groups it's quite evident that, even if students really try to explain all the strategies they use, some of them have been omitted or forgotten. To cite an instance, table 1 indicates that no person in the group A (1° ESO D) practices the listening skill, whereas in that same class there are 11 people out of 16 who declare practicing the speaking skill and, unless students practice speaking all alone (which is something quite unusual) they will be talking to somebody else, so they must be practicing also listening. All the rest of groups present too this kind of incoherences in their results, which makes the researcher wonder to what extent ESL/EFL students are aware of their strategic competence and/or performance. However, as a proposed explanation, the mentioned problem can be due to the fact that students disposed of a limited period of time to go through all the questions what could probably have shortened some of their answers. If students would have been left more time they would probably have made a more thorough description of the strategies they used and they could have noticed there were some techniques they used and which they hadn't been mentioned. Other factor that could have influenced the students' answers was the fact that the list of strategies in the "Possible answers sheet" was very long (31 items), and some students started reading it and lost their attention as they went through the whole list. That's probably the reason why many students have left aside some very useful strategies that were located in the back side of the sheet, such as self-management, attempt and error, inductive inference and some others.

The second research question concerned differences in the types and frequency of use of strategies among younger and older students. Results show that students in 1° ESO (A and B) recur to intended observation, repetition, practice and resourcing in the cognitive field, whereas learners in 4° ESO have reported to use more than any other strategy translation, transfer and prediction and pupils in 2° Bachiller prefer intended observation, key words, repetition and contextualisation. We observe a wide variety of choices and, despite the similarities between the oldest and the youngest groups, the skills to which students apply these techniques are not the same in both cases and the frequencies of use also differ noticeably, so we can say that students in 1° ESO, 4° ESO and 2° Bachiller use different cognitive skills when facing the same type of exercises and with very different rates of use. Regarding metacognitive strategies, selective attention has been the most used strategy in all the groups, something which can be simply due to the fact that teachers always advise and remind their students to focus in the

information they're being asked and not to worry about what they don't understand well. Apart from that, students in groups A, B and C have reported to use advance preparation and directed attention very often and students in groups D and E also use advance preparation, but they use too self-evaluation, self-monitoring even more than directed attention and advance preparation. Despite these slight differences in the rate of use, we can affirm that in this case students of very different ages and levels have reported have a similar metacognitive strategic behaviour but the rate of use of the strategies mentioned slightly differ in some cases. Finally, with regard to social affective strategies, the most used techniques in groups A and B have been asking for clarification and anxiety lowering, followed from a discreet distance by cooperation (although it's clear that if a student asks for clarification in a foreign language he/she's already somehow cooperating). However, the upper courses have reported to use more cooperation than any other technique, even more than asking for clarification, yet some authors could think that it's not a noteworthy issue as it doesn't make a real difference. Furthermore, it can be argued that all groups use more social-affective strategies in the speaking skill than within any other category, so the researcher concludes that all groups seem to have a quite similar social-affective behaviour since the number of mentioned strategies for each skill in all the groups seems to follow a common pattern (figures are very similar in all the groups), though older students tend to increase their rate of use of social-affective strategies in the speaking skill much more than younger ones. Apart from that, some action researchers argue, given the results of their investigations, that intermediate level students tend to use proportionally more metacognitive strategies than students with lower proficiency level proficiency (O'Malley et al., 1985) and that metacognitive strategy use rose as the foreign language course level increased (Chamot et al., 1987). This aspect can be observed in the present study, since students in 1° ESO B have reported to use proportionally less metacognitive strategies (56 mentions in all the skills in a 19-student classroom) than students in 2° Bachiller (with 115 mentions by 24 pupils).

Concerning the third research question, below we can see the table of strategies with the reference to the total times all the strategies have been mentioned in all the groups:

STRATEGIES	LINGUISTIC SKILLS			
	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
ALL GROUPS				
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextualisation 35 • Resourcing 33 • Intended Observation 28 • Key words 26 • Translation 25 • Verifying 20 • Emphasizing 17 • Transfer 17 • Elaboration 16 • Repetition 15 • Deductive Reasoning 13 • Summary 13 • Inductive Inference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation 42 • Intended Observation 35 • Contextualisation 33 • Transfer 31 • Prediction 28 • Key words 27 • Elaboration 20 • Phrase analysis 19 • Note-taking 18 • Summary 15 • Deductive Reasoning 13 • Inductive Inference 13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended Observation 52 • Resourcing 37 • Auditory Representation 36 • Verifying 30 • Translation 27 • Inductive Inference 25 • Transfer 24 • Deductive Reasoning 23 • Practice 22 • Repetition 18 • Contextualisation 16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice 53 • Transfer 32 • Resourcing 25 • Attempt and Error 24 • Auditory Representation 24 • Translation 23 • Intended Observation 22 • Inductive Inference 20 • Elaboration 19 • Repetition 16 • Deductive Reasoning 15

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prediction 12 • Phrase analysis 10 • Practice 7 • Note-taking 5 • Auditory Representation 3 • Attempt and Error 0 • Grouping 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resourcing 13 • Auditory Representation 11 • Verifying 9 • Practice 5 • Grouping 4 • Attempt and Error 1 • Emphasizing 1 • Repetition 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt and Error 12 • Elaboration 9 • Grouping 8 • Note-taking 6 • Summary 6 • Key words 4 • Emphasizing 3 • Prediction 3 • Phrase analysis 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prediction 8 • Grouping 5 • Note-taking 3 • Phrase analysis 3 • Contextualisation 2 • Key words 2 • Verifying 2 • Summary 1 • Emphasizing 0
Cognitive (total)	307	339	362	299
Metacognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 42 • Self-monitoring 11 • Self-evaluation 9 • Directed Attention 7 • Advance Organisers 4 • Advance Preparation 2 • Self-management 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention 59 • Directed Attention 17 • Self-monitoring 15 • Self-management 9 • Self-evaluation 6 • Advance Organisers 1 • Advance Preparation 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance Preparation 36 • Selective Attention 26 • Directed Attention 16 • Self-management 9 • Self-monitoring 9 • Advance Organisers 7 • Self-evaluation 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance Preparation 34 • Directed Attention 18 • Selective Attention 15 • Self-evaluation 12 • Self-management 9 • Self-monitoring 5 • Advance Organisers 3
Metacognitive (total)	76	107	110	96
Social-affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for Clarification 12 • Cooperation 5 • Anxiety Expression 0 • Anxiety Lowering 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for Clarification 8 • Anxiety Lowering 5 • Cooperation 5 • Anxiety Expression 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation 12 • Anxiety lowering 7 • Asking for Clarification 6 • Anxiety Expression 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation 50 • Anxiety Lowering 19 • Asking for Clarification 18 • Anxiety Expression 6
Social-affective (total)	20	21	26	93

As the table shows, cognitive strategies have been the most mentioned kind of technique among all the researched groups, something that is not surprising at all, since previous research suggest that students at all levels of instruction use predominantly cognitive strategies supported by metacognitive strategies that help them plan, monitor and evaluate their work (Chamot, 1987)⁶. The most used cognitive technique in these groups has been intended observation (144 mentions in all groups and all skills) followed by the metacognitive strategy selective attention (142 mentions), and again by the cognitive strategies translation (117 allusions), resourcing (108 allusions) and transfer (104 mentions). As for the less used strategies, social-affective anxiety expression has been the less mentioned technique with only 10 allusions closely followed by advance organisers (metacognitive strategy) with 15 mentions and the cognitive strategy of grouping (putting parts of the theory in groups depending on their common features in order to organise the information and to build a framework for learning) with 17 mentions. As we would have expected,

⁶ Chamot, A. U. A Study of Learning Strategies in Foreign Language Instruction. First Year Report, 1987.

students use much more strategies when writing (495 mentions), speaking (488 mentions) and even listening (467) than when reading (412). Nevertheless, there is a quite curious aspect that grabbed the researcher's attention from the beginning which is the fact that social-affective strategies, having a quite limited rate of use within the rest of skills, always reached much higher percentages within the speaking skill in all the groups researched in this study, so we can conclude that all these subjects relevantly increase their social-affective strategies' use when speaking.

Finally, the last research question considered the possible correlation between the wide use of strategies from the students' part and the highest marks in the groups. Based on the results of several studies that support this assumption, the most feasible hypothesis was that successful English learners will develop a higher number of strategies than those who had more difficulties with the English language:

“Second language learners who use active and varied strategies to assist their learning tend to be more effective learners than those who do not use strategies or who rely upon simple role repetition” (Rubin, 1975).

“Frequency of strategy use can be seen as a gradient condition in which greater instances of strategy use are likely to be associated with effective learning” (O'Malley, Chamot, Kupper, 1986).

However, this hypothesis seemed to be rejected in this study, since the following charts show that most advanced students don't necessarily report to use a higher number of strategies than students who seem to have more difficulties with English language. Results have been obtained dividing the students' marks in four groups; those who have an 8 or more as an average mark form part of Group A, those whose average mark is between 7,9 and 6 form Group B, students whose average mark is between 5,9 and 5 form group C and those who have 4,9 or less as their average mark make up Group D.

GROUP A (1° ESO D)

Number of students: 16

Average mark of the class: 6,56

Average use of strategies per person: 24

STUDENTS	AVERAGE MARK	STRATEGIES MENTIONED
Student A	9,3	27
Student B	8,8	16
Student C	8,3	25
Student D	8	20
Student E	7,4	22
Student F	6,8	25

Student G	6,7	9
Student H	6,5	15
Student I	6,3	39
Student J	5,9	33
Student K	5,9	12
Student L	5,6	24
Student M	5,1	24
Student N	5	41
Student O	4,8	34
Student P	4,7	18
	AVERAGE: 6,56	TOTAL: 384

In this case, Group A has mentioned an average of 22 strategies per person, Group B has an average use of 22 strategies per person too, Group C has mentioned an average of 27 strategies per student and Group D has alluded to a total of 26 techniques per pupil as an average. We can see that those students who have difficulties to pass or even fail the subject report to use a wider number and variety of students than those who have from 6,3 to 9,3 as their average mark. As a proposed explanation, we could argue that students who interiorize English concepts in a natural way could probably tend to be more unaware of their own strategic behaviour because English doesn't pose any problem for them and they don't need to develop tricks, techniques or strategies that help them in their learning. On the opposite side, learners who must make a real effort to pass the subject could be prone to develop or create more strategies as a compensation for their lack of knowledge in some fields and they are also more aware of the techniques they use for they are familiarised with that kind of mental, conscious processes on which they fall back in many occasions. This class, along with 2º ESO A, presents the second highest average use of strategies per person (24) in all the groups researched.

GROUP B (1º ESO B)

Number of students: 19

Average mark of the class: 4,92

Average use of strategies per person: 17

STUDENTS	AVERAGE MARK	STRATEGIES MENTIONED
Student A	9,3	25
Student B	9,2	20
Student C	7,8	21
Student D	7	19
Student E	6,2	18

Student F	6	18
Student G	5,9	13
Student H	5	31
Student I	4,8	9
Student J	4,4	15
Student K	4,3	28
Student L	4,1	11
Student M	4	4
Student N	3,6	10
Student O	3,5	25
Student P	3,5	8
Student Q	2,3	23
Student R	1,3	18
Student S	1,2	12
	AVERAGE: 4,92	TOTAL: 328

As we can see, Group A has now mentioned an average of 23 strategies per person, Group B has stated an average use of 19 strategies per person, Group C has mentioned an average of 22 strategies per student and Group D has alluded to a total of 15 techniques per pupil as an average. In this case, we observe that the most advanced group presents the highest average of strategy use, yet the difference with group C is not significant since they have a very similar average. Thus, we can affirm that in this class most advanced students use a wide number of strategies that will probably help them achieving that high marks and students close to fail also develop a wide number of strategies, whereas students who don't have problems passing the subject present again a low average of strategy use along with those who have the subject average failed.

GROUP C (2° ESO A)

Number of students: 17

Average mark of the class: 4,28

Average use of strategies per person: 24

STUDENTS	AVERAGE MARK	STRATEGIES MENTIONED
Student A	9	26
Student B	6,5	33
Student C	6,4	20
Student D	5,9	12
Student E	5,2	38

Student F	5	42
Student G	5	28
Student H	4,9	32
Student I	4,5	13
Student J	4	15
Student K	3,8	15
Student L	3,4	22
Student M	2,5	29
Student N	2	19
Student O	1,9	17
Student P	1,5	18
Student Q	1,3	29
	AVERAGE: 4,28	TOTAL: 408

As the table shows, Group A has mentioned an average of 26 strategies per person (there's just one student in that category), Group B has an average use of 27 strategies per person, Group C has mentioned an average use of 30 strategies per student and Group D has alluded to a total of 22 techniques per pupil as an average. Despite being the group with the lowest average mark in all the researched classes it has, along with 1° ESO D, one of the highest averages of strategies use per person in all the groups analysed. Again, Group C has the highest average of strategy use per person, closely followed by groups B and C. In this case (as well as in the previous class), failed students seem to ignore or to leave out many learning strategies that could help them in their learning process without any doubt.

GROUP D (4° ESO A)

Number of students: 11

Average mark of the class: 5,64

Average use of strategies per person: 27

STUDENTS	AVERAGE MARK	STRATEGIES MENTIONED
Student A	9,4	32
Student B	8	37
Student C	7,3	27
Student D	7	29
Student E	5,8	15
Student F	4,5	31
Student G	4,5	23

Student H	4,3	18
Student I	4	16
Student J	3,7	42
Student K	3,6	29
	AVERAGE: 5,64	TOTAL: 299

In this class, Group A has mentioned an average of 35 strategies per person, Group B has an average use of 28 strategies per person, Group C has mentioned an average of 15 strategies per student (there's just one) and Group D has alluded to a total of 27 techniques per pupil as an average. This class presents the highest average strategy use per person (27) in all the groups researched. In this case, the strategic frequency behaviour seems differ a bit from the pattern we could observe in the previous situations, since group A is has the highest average of strategy use by far and it's followed, from a long distance, by groups B and D which previously seemed to be more reluctant to use a high number of strategies.

GROUP E (2° BACHILLER)

Number of students: 24

Average mark of the class: 6,17

Average use of strategies per person: 18

STUDENTS	AVERAGE MARK	STRATEGIES MENTIONED
Student A	9,5	29
Student B	9	23
Student C	8,4	26
Student D	8,4	23
Student E	7,5	12
Student F	7	13
Student G	6,8	39
Student H	6,8	18
Student I	6,7	32
Student J	6,5	12
Student K	6	18
Student L	5,8	15
Student M	5,8	9
Student N	5,6	21
Student O	5,6	10
Student P	5,5	15
Student Q	5,5	7

Student R	5	22
Student S	5	21
Student T	5	17
Student U	4,5	17
Student V	4,3	12
Student W	4,2	18
Student X	3,7	11
	AVERAGE: 6,17	TOTAL: 440

Results show that Group A has mentioned an average of 25 strategies per person, Group B has an average use of 19 strategies per person, Group C has mentioned an average of 15 strategies per student and Group D has alluded to a total of 15 techniques per pupil as an average too. This case illustrates better than any other one O'Malley, Chamot, Kupper and Rubin's theory, which sustained that more advanced students tend to use more strategies than lower-level students, which is not the common pattern in the present study.

CONCLUSIONS

Results in this study suggest the EFL/ESL Spanish students researched are not totally aware of their strategic behaviour when learning English, since there are some inconsistencies in their answers that lead the researcher to the conclusion that several of them hadn't expressed all the strategies they actually used during their learning process. As for the differences and similarities in the strategic behaviour of younger and older groups, results indicate that cognitive strategies seem to vary quite a lot (both in techniques and frequency) from youngest group to oldest ones, so we could deduce from this results that students have different cognitive strategic behaviour when they're in 1° ESO, in 4° ESO and in 2° Bachiller. Regarding metacognitive strategies, results tend to demonstrate there are significant similarities among the metacognitive strategies used in 1° ESO, 4° ESO and 2° Bachiller as well as in their frequencies of use so we could say that, in this case, there is a common pattern for the use of metacognitive strategies among groups of 1° ESO, 4° ESO and 2° Bachiller researched. Finally, as aforementioned, we can also observe a clear resemblance in the use of social-affective strategies among groups of 1° ESO, 4° ESO and 2° Bachiller especially within the speaking skill, where this kind of strategies have experienced a relevant increase in the rate of use of all the researched groups. According to the study results, cognitive strategies have been the most mentioned kind of technique. The most used cognitive technique was intended observation followed by selective attention (metacognitive). As for the less used strategies, anxiety expression (social-affective) has been the less mentioned technique followed by advance organisers (metacognitive). It has also been proved that students in the researched groups use more strategies in writing, speaking and listening activities than in reading exercises. Finally, after analysing the use of strategies and the average students' marks, in this case the researcher concludes there is no

necessary relationship between a wide use of strategies and a high-level language proficiency and command. There is just one case in which that hypothesis is accomplished yet, in the other hand, most cases show that students who present more difficulties to pass the subject (but who pass it) develop in many occasions a close or even a larger number of strategies than more successful or better learners in order to compensate their lack of knowledge.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Once the first set of questionnaires had been already passed in 1º ESO, the researcher discovered some weak points in the questionnaire that could have been modified or avoided if the researcher wouldn't have followed the same sample as in the previous study this paper tries to replicate and broaden. However, it was crucial to keep the same questionnaire intact for all the groups researched, otherwise results could be altered or influenced by the changes carried out so the researcher finally decided to carry on the experiment with the original questionnaire. However, as a suggestion, the researcher would have omitted questions number 2, 18 and 19 since they are actually testing the direct strategy of memorization, as well as number 20 that ask students about their attitude towards learning strategies and about their need to be taught. All these questions have not been taught into account in the present paper and can be thus object of future publications.

Furthermore, despite the researcher tried to do everything possible in order to avoid it, some students were quite excited, bored and/or absent-minded when doing the questionnaire, since it was something quite different for them and they had been told that the results wouldn't be taken into account for their final marks. Their slack work and demotivated attitude is reflected in some of their questionnaires where students have reported not to use nearly strategies and not to consider important this issue at all. The researcher attributes this partial failure to several factors: first of all, students shouldn't have known if the answers would have an impact on their marks. In case the researcher was asked, the most suitable answer would have been that hadn't been already decided (even being false) in order to maintain the students' interest and concentration. In second place, the researcher considers also important the fact that student's hadn't been introduced into the principles of learning strategies and didn't know much nor about the subject. If we add all that to the fact that students only had 55 minutes to go through all the questions, it can be deduced that some students didn't take the questionnaire as seriously as they were to and that results could have probably been slightly different if more students would have made sure they had detailed all the strategies they actually used. In the light of all these factors, the researcher recommends to make a little introduction to learning strategies before passing the questionnaire to students, to shorten or omit some of the questions in order to have students finish the questionnaire and revise it properly and not to communicate students if the test will have any influence in their average marks.

Finally, after reviewing the existing literature, the researcher found out that most studies of learning strategy applications indicate that strategy training generally improves the performance of students on a wide range of tasks and enhances the development of the four skills. For that reason, instruction of

strategies for language learning and use have been receiving an increasingly amount of attention in the fields of foreign language teaching and learning for the last thirty years (Wittrock, Marks & Doctorow 1975, Weinstein & Mayer 1986, Oxford 1990, Cohen 1990, O'Malley & Chamot 1990, Wenden 1991, Brown 1991, Rubin & Thompson 1994, Mendelsohn 1994, McDonough 1995). Nevertheless, in this case, it has been impossible for the researcher to get involved in a longitudinal study which analyses changes in strategic behaviour over time due to her brief stay within the centre, yet she would have been definitely interested in delving into a more thorough approach of this fundamental issue. These limitations notwithstanding, the present paper contributes to the ongoing task of analysing students' strategic behaviour and makes some important contributions to the understanding of factors that influence language learning.

As for the pedagogical implications of this study, the researcher hopes the aforementioned findings can serve as a reference for teachers and researchers who want to diagnose the learning difficulties of students and to help them to deal with them effectively in the field of strategy learning and behaviour. As teachers, we must show and explain students all the strategies they have at their disposal since they can be very useful in their learning process and can help students who most need it. We must also wonder why the learner is unable or reluctant to use some specific learning strategies yet, from the researcher's point of view, when a learner complains about strategy use it is possible that he/she has direct or indirect problems developing certain kinds of techniques, something that could be easily solved with some practice on them. We could also think about in which stage of the learning process the learner experiences most difficulties with a certain strategy and which are the most problematic skills according to the students' belief. Finally, we could also wonder if English textbooks and materials often used by teachers in class really enhance the development of a wide variety of strategies in the four skills as well as in problem-solving tasks, which is something that instructors don't usually take into account albeit it should be one of our main causes of concern.

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APPENDIX